

PRAGMATIC AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF SPANISH DEICTIC EXPRESSIONS IN BARCELONA¹

Robert E. Vann

Western Michigan University

In English, words like *come*, *go*, *this*, *that*, *here*, *there*, and *yonder* can take on a different referent depending on the identity and location of the participants involved in the context of the discourse. So, when I say 'this handout I have here', the words do not refer to the same handout as they do when someone in the back of the room says them. The linguistic term for words that behave in this way is *deictic*, from the Greek word meaning 'to point'. Such words are called deictics, or said to have deictic reference. Clearly, we can see that participant identity and location are important building blocks of deictic reference. The precise combination of these building blocks for a given word can be called the *pragmatic scope* of the word, because pragmatics is the sub-branch of linguistics that takes real-world contextual notions such as participant identity and location into account. This paper focuses on the pragmatic scope of deictic terms in an underdocumented variety of Spanish in contact with Catalan in Barcelona, Spain that I first described in Vann (1996). In this variety of Spanish, deictic terms are used innovatively. In the present paper, I argue that this innovative use represents the application, or transfer, of Catalan pragmatics to the Spanish deictics and that the frequency of this transfer is predictable. Furthermore, I propose that deictic usage that reflects pragmatic transfer from Catalan represents a linguistic resource of Catalan identity.

The situation at hand concerns participant identity and location as pragmatic scope elements that form different combinations of reference in Spanish and in Catalan. In Barcelona, one often hears people using deictic words in Spanish according to the Catalan system of reference. Such usage can be seen as a transfer, from Catalan to Spanish, of the pragmatic scope of the deictics. My hypothesis is that relative exposure to Catalan and Spanish in language acquisition may affect how often individuals in Barcelona make this transfer. Thus, my analysis uses an empirically constructed index of relative exposure to both languages as a measure of language acquisition for each informant. In terms of the relative exposure index, I predict increasing amounts of pragmatic transfer with increased exposure to Catalan.

My terminology is the following. I use the terms *Spanish* and *Catalan* to refer to generalized abstractions of these two distinct Romance languages, the term *Castilian Spanish* to refer to the variety of Spanish spoken by many Spaniards, and the term *Catalan Spanish* to refer to the variety of Spanish spoken by many people in Catalonia. I cite examples from Castilian Spanish because it is the variety of Spanish spoken in closest geographical proximity to Catalonia and its regional capital, Barcelona. Yet, because the deictics used in the examples of Castilian are also valid in most other varieties of Spanish, Castilian can be regarded as representative of the vast majority of Spanish dialects in its treatment of the deictics under consideration.

The rest of the paper is organized in four sections. First I review briefly how deixis has been analyzed in seminal literature and I give examples of how Catalan and Castilian differ in their treatment of the deictics I have investigated. Next, I highlight points of potential transfer and illustrate the transfer with a return to the examples already given for Catalan and Castilian. Finally, I summarize the quantitative results of my analysis and I conclude with a brief qualitative discussion of my study's implications.

¹ I would like to acknowledge the aid of the Program for Cultural Cooperation between Spain's Ministry of Culture and United States' Universities, subvention #1490, whose support helped make this research possible.

Deixis

Work on deixis has generally assumed, since Fillmore (1975), that deixis is systematic. Fillmore (1975:39) addressed the deictic system of a language based on 'those formal properties of utterances which are determined by, and which are interpreted by knowing, certain aspects of the communication act'. The aspects he noted were, among others, the identity of the interlocutors (person deixis) and the place or places in which these individuals are located (place deixis). Fillmore observed that there is dialectal differentiation of deictics based on which aspects of the communication act they differentiate and depend on, such as the definition and use of *yonder* or *bring* and *take* in English. It follows, then, that each language may also define its subsystems of deictic terms based on which aspects of the communication act are differentiated. As I alluded to earlier, the common aspects of person and place deixis differentiated and combined in certain deictic subsystems of a language can be seen as the pragmatic scope of these deictic systems in the language under consideration. The significance of this observation lies in crosslinguistic comparison. Although one might naturally think otherwise, crosslinguistically, the pragmatic scope of deixis can vary.

Catalan deictic verbs of motion, demonstratives, and locatives are mostly cognate in form with their counterparts in Castilian. Yet, if one were to compare the pragmatic scope for these words in each language, one would find systematic differences. Catalan includes the location of the addressee in the deictic center of all of these words, whereas Castilian is entirely speaker-centered. This distribution is given in Table 1, based in part on analyses given for Catalan by Rigau (1976), for Castilian by Gathercole (1978), and for both languages in contrast by Nilsson (1984).

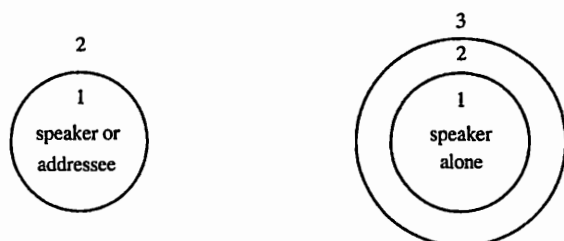
Table 1: Pragmatic scope contrast for certain deictics in Catalan and Castilian

[s] = location of speaker, [a] = location of addressee

Gloss	Catalan: deictic and scope	Castilian: deictic and scope
'come'	<i>venir</i> motion towards [s] or [a]	<i>venir</i> motion only towards [s]
'go'	<i>anar</i> motion towards [-s, -a]	<i>ir</i> motion only away from [s]
'bring'	<i>portar</i> motion [+obj] towards [s/a/other]	<i>traer</i> motion [+obj] only towards [s]
'take'	"	<i>llevar</i> motion [+obj] only away from [s]
'this'	<i>aquest</i> object near [s] or [a]	<i>este</i> object near [s]
'that'	"	<i>ese</i> object not too far from [s]
'yonder'	<i>aquell</i> object not near [s] or [a]	<i>aquel</i> object very far from [s]
'here'	<i>aquí</i> object near [s] or [a]	<i>aquí</i> object near [s]
'there'	"	<i>ahí</i> object not too far from [s]
'yonder'	<i>allà</i> object not near [s] or [a]	<i>allí</i> object very far from [s]

Another way of viewing the situation is that in both Catalan and Spanish, all of these deictics involve either motion into or out of constructed deictic centers, or location relative to these centers. In this view, the only things that differ in the treatment of these words in Catalan and Castilian are the people included within the deictic centers and the number of zones surrounding these centers. This model could be conceived of as in Figure 1, which is based, in part, on a simpler analysis of Spanish demonstratives given by Hottenroth (1982).

Figure 1: Conceptions of deictic centers in Catalan and Castilian



In the model shown in Figure 1, the small circles represent the deictic centers for all of the deictics under consideration in Catalan and Castilian, respectively, with the exception of *portar* in Catalan, which can also include a third party in its deictic center. The diagram for Castilian has one circle more than the diagram for Catalan because, for the demonstratives and locatives, Castilian can distinguish three discrete regions of proximity to the deictic center, whereas Catalan only makes a two-way distinction--inside or outside. The regions are numbered in the diagram in order of relative proximity to the deictic center.

Now that it is clearer just how these words work, consider the comparative examples below to demonstrate how deictic usage differs in Catalan and Castilian, word by word. Compare first the motion verbs used to respond to a doorbell in Castilian Spanish (1a) and in Catalan (1b).

- 1a) ¡Ya voy! (*vengo)! {Castilian Spanish}
I'm going! (*coming)!
1b) Ja vinc! (*vaig)! {Catalan}
I'm coming! (*going)!

Now compare the motion [+obj] verbs used in a telephone conversation between colleagues, each of whom is at work in a different office. One party is soon to return some files to the other, as expressed in Castilian Spanish (2a) and Catalan (2b).

- 2a) Ya te los llevo! (*traigo) a tu oficina {Castilian Spanish}
I'll take! (*bring) them to your office
2b) Ja t'els porto al teu despatx {Catalan}
I'll bring them to your office

Moving to the demonstratives, compare now an object that is clearly near the speaker but far from the hearer versus one that is clearly near the hearer but far from the speaker. If the speaker and the hearer are facing each other from across a room, then the speaker could say (3a) in Castilian Spanish or (3b) in Catalan.

- 3a) Me gusta este al lado mío, no ese! (*este) detrás tuyo {Castilian Spanish}
I like this one next to me, not that! (*this) one behind you
3b) M'agrada aquest al costat meu, no pas aquest! (*aquell) darrera teu {Catalan}
I like this one next to me, not this! (*yonder) one behind you

Finally, compare the locatives used in a telephone conversation between two people in different houses, in Castilian Spanish (4a) and Catalan (4b)

4a) ¿Qué tal va todo ahí/(**aquí*) en tu casa? {Castilian Spanish}
How are things going there/(**here*) in your house?

4b) Com va això aquí/(**allà*) a casa teva? {Catalan}
How are things going here/(**there*) in your house?

Points of potential transfer

People in Catalonia who learn to speak Spanish are faced with competing and variable norms when using the deictic terms discussed above. In lieu of adopting Castilian Spanish usage rules, many such individuals simply extend the pragmatic scope of Spanish deictics, using them according to the pragmatic scope of the corresponding Catalan deictics, as shown in the examples below. Such usage Catalanizes the Spanish, thus, we can speak of *Catalan Spanish* as opposed to Castilian Spanish when it comes to the deictics. The extended scope is often applied to the Spanish verb *venir* (similar to *venir* in Catalan), the Spanish verb *traer*, the Spanish demonstrative *este* (similar to *aquest* in Catalan), and the Spanish locative *aquí* (similar to *aquí* in Catalan).

In Catalan Spanish, the innovative usage of the deictics mentioned above can be overgeneralized at the expense of usage of *ir*, *llevar*, *ese*, and *ahí*, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Pragmatic scope of certain deictics in Catalan Spanish

Gloss	Catalan Spanish	Gloss	Catalan Spanish	Gloss	Catalan Spanish	Gloss	Catalan Spanish
'come'	venir	'bring'	traer	'this'	este	'here'	aquí
'go'		'take'		'that'		'there'	
				'yonder'	aquel	'yonder'	allí

The innovative use of these words can be illustrated by re-examining the previous examples. For each of the next data sets, the grayed out examples in (a) and (b), representing the norms for Castilian Spanish and Catalan, respectively, are the same examples that were given earlier. The examples in (c) show the innovation that can be heard in Catalan Spanish. Compare again the motion verbs used to respond to a doorbell in Castilian Spanish (5a), Catalan (5b), and now, in Catalan Spanish (5c) as well. We saw earlier how *come* and *go* are used differently in Catalan and Spanish, (5c) shows the transfer of *come* for *go* in the Spanish spoken by some people in Barcelona.

5a) ¡Ya voy/(**vengo*)! {Castilian Spanish}
I'm going/(**coming*)!

5b) Ja vinc/(**vaig*)! {Catalan}
I'm coming/(**going*)!

5c) ¡Ya vengo! {Catalan Spanish}
I'm coming!

Now re-examine the motion [+obj] verbs. The context is a telephone conversation between

colleagues, each of whom is at work, where one party is soon to return some files to the other Catalan Spanish (6c) uses *bring* where Castilian Spanish uses *take*

- 6a) Ya te los llevo/(**traigo*) a tu oficina (Castilian Spanish)
I'll *take*/(**bring*) them to your office
- 6b) Ja t'els porto al teu despatx (Catalan)
I'll *bring* them to your office
- 6c) Ya te los traigo a tu oficina (Catalan Spanish)
I'll *bring* them to your house

Next we return to the demonstratives used to contrast two objects, one that is clearly near the speaker but far from the hearer versus one that is clearly near the hearer but far from the speaker, when the speaker and the hearer are across the room from one another Catalan Spanish (7c) uses *this* where Castilian Spanish uses *that*

- 7a) Me gusta este al lado mío, no *ese*/(**este*) detrás tuyo (Castilian Spanish)
I like this one next to me, not *that*/(**this*) one behind you
- 7b) M'agrada aquest al costat meu, no pas *aquest*/(**aquell*) darrera teu (Catalan)
I like this one next to me, not *this*/(**yonder*) one behind you
- 7c) Me gusta este al lado mío, no *este* detrás tuyo (Catalan Spanish)
I like this one next to me, not *this* one behind you

Finally, compare again the locatives used in a telephone conversation between two people in different houses Catalan Spanish (8c) uses *here* where Castilian Spanish uses *there*

- 8a) ¿Qué tal va todo *ahí*/(**aquí*) en tu casa? (Castilian Spanish)
How are things going *there*/(**here*) in your house?
- 8b) Com va això *aquí*/(**allà*) a casa teva? (Catalan)
How are things going *here*/(**there*) in your house?
- 8c) ¿Qué tal va todo *aquí* en tu casa? (Catalan Spanish)
How are things going *here* in your house?

Results

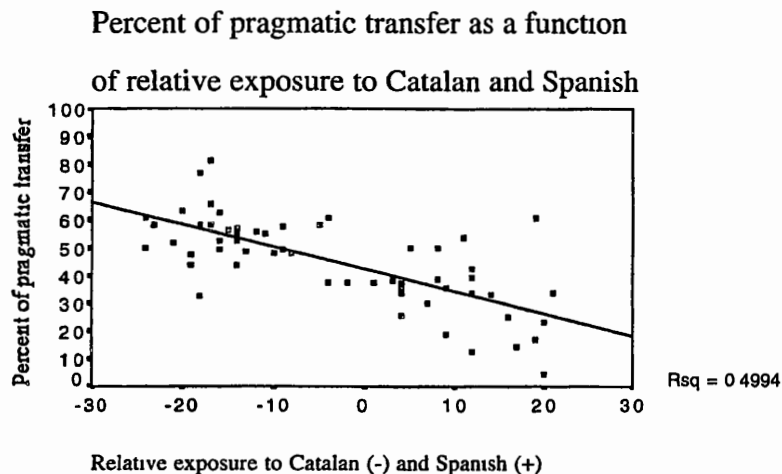
Usage of the type described above has been quantified for the present investigation. Following a short discussion of my methodology, I will present the results of the quantitative analysis. In the role of both friend and investigator (cf. Edwards 1986, Milroy 1987) I was able to enter successfully into the personal networks of two fieldworkers in Barcelona. The sample included one network of 26 people who often speak Spanish and another of 32 people who often speak Catalan. Informants were male and female, ranging in age from sixteen to seventy-four, although the great majority fall between seventeen and twenty-three. In general, informants fall into the middle to upper middle classes, and almost all have received at least a high school education.

The interview format was used to gather quantifiable data from each informant. Each interview lasted about an hour, all interaction was strictly in Spanish and the interviews were all recorded. During the interviews, informants were prompted orally and visually in three linguistic tasks involving the two pairs of motion verbs, the demonstratives, and the locatives. These target

deictics were each tested twelve times per speaker. Towards the end of each interview, self-report data were gathered on the informant's language background through an informal questionnaire.

SPSS 6.1 for the Macintosh was used to tabulate data. Analysis revealed that innovative deictic usage increased with more relative exposure to Catalan ($p < 0.001$, $Rsq = .49$), i.e., more Catalan linguistic socialization and a more Catalan cultural background. The important role of relative exposure in predicting the frequency of pragmatic transfer is graphed in Plot 1.

Plot 1



Conclusions and implications

The results above show empirically that the frequency of the transfer of the pragmatic scope associated with deixis is predictable in the linguistic community under investigation. These results support the hypothesis that relative exposure to Catalan and Spanish in language acquisition may affect how often individuals in Barcelona transfer the pragmatic scope of the deictic words from Catalan to Spanish. Transfer from Catalan into Spanish increases with increased exposure to Catalan. This finding begs the following questions: Is the transfer nothing more than linguistic interference? Assuming for a moment that the transfer were unconscious, if people were made aware of the facts, would they want to change their linguistic behavior? Since use of deictics, like use of other aspects of language, can be interpreted as a linguistic stereotype and then re-interpreted as a linguistic resource, such a choice might be important.

Thompson (in Bourdieu, 1991: 39) reminds us that 'each recipient helps to produce the message which he perceives and appreciates by bringing to it everything that makes up his singular and collective experience' (italics in original). I agree. Qualitative analysis in Vann (to appear) suggests that innovative deictic usage can function as a linguistic resource to communicate the symbolic capital of Catalan ethnicity. That is, because the innovative usage is linked to exposure to

Catalan ways of speaking, or patterns of cultural and linguistic experience, the innovative terms themselves may also be understood as expressions of Catalanism or Catalanist discourse. Thus, I propose that a Catalanist ethnic or ideological message is present in the usage of the deictics for those able and willing to hear it. Recognizing and appreciating a message of Catalanism associated with a particular Catalan way of speaking implies prior exposure to the linguistic expression used and prior exposure to and internalization of the cultural message conveyed, i.e., a certain degree of communicative competence. Insofar as individuals in the Catalan lands are presumably the only Spanish speakers socialized with this singular communicative competence, their variety of Spanish can be considered both ethnic and unique. Thus, further analysis of this variety is most certainly warranted. If the Spanish of Catalonia really is a distinct variety, it will likely have other distinguishing characteristics, many of which may, like use of the deictics, represent both linguistic transfer from Catalan as well as a potential resource of expressing Catalan identity.

REFERENCES

- Bourdieu, Pierre 1991 *Language and symbolic power*, ed and intro by John B. Thompson. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Edwards, Viv 1986 *Language in a black community*. San Diego: College-Hill Press.
- Fillmore, Charles 1975 *Santa Cruz lectures on deixis*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Linguistics Club.
- Gathercole, Virginia 1978 *Towards a universal for deictic verbs of motion*. *Kansas working papers in linguistics* 3: 72-88.
- Hottenroth, Priska-Monika 1982 *The system of local deixis in Spanish: Here and there*. *Cross-linguistic studies on deixis and demonstration*, ed. by Jürgen Weissenborn and Wolfgang Klein, 133-153. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Milroy, Lesley 1987 *Language and social networks*. 2nd edn. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Nilsson, Kare 1984 *Observaciones sobre el uso de los adverbios deícticos del castellano (aquí, acá, etc.) y sus formas correspondientes en catalán y portugués*. *Revue Romane* 19: 219-244.
- Rigau i Oliver, Gemma 1976 *Anem o venim?* *Els Marges* 8: 33-53.
- SPSS® 6.1.1 for the Macintosh [Computer software]. 1995. Chicago: SPSS Inc.
- Vann, Robert 1996 *Pragmatic and cultural aspects of an emergent language variety: The construction of Catalan Spanish deictic expressions* (University Microfilms No. 9633318). Ann Arbor, MI: Dissertation Abstracts International.
- Vann, Robert To appear *Constructing Catalanism through deictic transfer in the Spanish spoken in two personal networks in Barcelona: A qualitative analysis of identity and ideology*. *Catalan Review*.